



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: Clean Boating

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Background:

Boating is a growing recreational activity for many Southern New Englanders. (Rhode Island has seen a 37% growth in boat registration in the last 10 years). With so many more boats out there, contamination from boat toilets can pollute the water by introducing disease-carrying microorganisms and toxic chemicals, which can lead to restrictions on shellfishing, beach closures and fish kills. In 1998, Rhode Island became the first state in the nation to designate its coastal waters as a No-Discharge Area, meaning that no dumping of wastewater from boats - whether treated or untreated - is allowed. Connecticut and Massachusetts still allow treated dumping in some areas, but are in the process of becoming federally designated No-Discharge Areas.

All boats with permanently installed toilets must visit a marine pump-out facility, most of which are self-service and free of charge. The process is quick and easy (visual of mechanics). Also, new in 2006, DEM began a compliance program which requires all boats with toilets to be inspected for compliance with the no-discharge law and to display a no-discharge certification decal. Certified agents, such as harbormasters and marine operators, conduct the inspections. Each decal is valid for four years and each agent may charge up to \$35. DEM, harbormasters and the Coast Guard will begin enforcing the law in June 2007 and fines could be up to \$100 for boats not in compliance.



Above, a local boater uses the pump out facility for his boat at Cove Haven Marina in Barrington. Below, pump out stations with directions.

Helpful tips for Channel 10 viewers:

- Carry a map of marine pump out facilities at all times (show book/map)
- Plan ahead - don't wait until the tank is full to be pumped out
- Call ahead - at times pump out facilities can malfunction; call ahead to ensure they are working properly

- Think about getting no-discharge certification decal when winterizing your boat this year to avoid the rush next spring

More information:

Viewers can find more information on the compliance program as well as pumpout facilities in Rhode Island, Mass and Connecticut on the DEM web at www.dem.ri.gov.

Interviewees:

- Michael Sullivan, Director, DEM
- Joe Migliore, DEM, Principal Environmental Scientist
- Michael Keyworth, Manager and Patrick Peck, Asst. Yard Manager for Mechanical and Special Products Cove Haven Marina (certified agent)